

## Ex. 20:7 - The Third Commandment

Written by Tim Black  
Sunday, 18 January 2009 18:14 -

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**Note:** You may download all study guides in one PDF file [here](#) .

### The 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment

*You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain,  
for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.*

### Exodus 20:7

### The Meaning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment

1.

**Command:** “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain”

1.

The Name of Yahweh

1.

God’s name “Yahweh” was not known/understood before Exodus 3

1.

**Ex. 6:3:** *I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them.*

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2.

God's name "Yahweh" is introduced in Exodus 3 when God called Moses

1.

God's responses to Moses' 4 objections indicate the meaning of "Yahweh"

□

□ Moses

□ God

□ 3:11

□ "Who am I?"

□ =

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**i**nsignificance

“ **I** will be with you”

**I**=

**p**resence

**3**:13

“ **W**hat is his name?”

**I**=

**n**o fulfilled promises, reputation, renown

“ **I** **A**M WHO I AM...I promise...I will stretch out my hand and strike...I will give...favor”

**I**=

**a**ctivity, reputation, redemption

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4:1

“They will not believe me”

=

*powerless*

“signs”

=

*power*

4:10

“I am not eloquent”

=

*cannot act*

“I will be with your mouth and teach you what to speak”

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⌋=

⌋*enables to act*

⌋4:13

⌋“⌋Send someone else”

⌋=

⌋*wrong person!*

⌋“⌋Aaron...I will be with your mouth”

⌋=

⌋*redeeming our person*

- 1.
- 1.
- 1.

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1.

The name “Yahweh” speaks of both God’s transcendent *existence* outside of creation and His immanent *activity* in creation

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The meaning of God’s name is found first in its reference to **Himself**; and not to anything else. God is *a se* (independent), and self-authenticating: “I AM WHO I AM”

1.

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1.

1.

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Note Ex. 3’s repeated use of the emphatic “I” (3:6, 11, 12, 19), “I AM / YHWH” (3:12, 14, 15, 16, 18), and first person verbs – *God* is the solution to Israel’s problems

1.

1.

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1.

1.

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The meaning of God's name was revealed in His **past acts of redemption**: "the God of Abraham...Isaac...and Jacob" = all of Genesis!

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The meaning of God's name will be revealed in His **future acts of redemption**: lit. "I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE" = by extension, all of Exodus – Revelation!

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**v. 17:** *I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt*

-

**vv. 19-22:** *19 The king of Egypt will not let you go unless **compelled by a mighty hand**. 20 So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt... I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians*

-

**Ex. 6:7:** *I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and **you shall know that I am the LORD** your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.*

-

**Ex. 7:5:** *The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.*  
Cf. 7:5, 17; 8:22; 10:2; 14:4, 13, 18;  
20:2!

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- 1.
- 1.
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This indeed happened: Through the plagues & Exodus, God's name became known throughout the Ancient Near East. The Egyptians (Ex. 14:25) and even Rahab the Canaanite (Josh. 2:11) feared the LORD

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**Ex. 14:25:** The **Egyptians** said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for **the LORD fights**  
**for them** against  
the Egyptians."



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- 1.
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God's name was the basis of His redeeming activity in the restoration & the New Covenant (Ezek. 6:13; 7:27; 11:10; 12:16; 36:22-23; 37:26-28), and God's redeeming activity and power is in view each time Christ applies the phrase "I am" to Himself (John 4:26; 6:35, 48; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11; 11:25; 15:1, 5; 18:5)

- 1.
- 1.
- 1.
- 1.

God's name signifies His **powerfully active presence in redemption**; His **presence in redemptive activity**

. Cf. Ex. 33:19; Is. 25:9; 41:4; 42:5-9; 45:5; Amos 4:13; 5:27.

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2.

“Take...in vain”

1.

NIV: “misuse”

2.

Literally, “take...for nothing”

3.

“Take” - receive, handle, use, act

1.

We are responsible to receive, respond to, and cooperate with God’s redeeming activity; to act in accord with His reputation for holiness.

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**Ezekiel 36:22-23:** 22 Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but **for the sake**

**of my holy name**

, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. 23 And

**I will vindicate the holiness of my great name**

, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And

**the nations will know that I am the LORD**

, declares the Lord GOD,

**when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.**

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**Ezek. 37:28:** *Then the nations will know that **I am the LORD who sanctifies** Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.*

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God's redemptive presence, power, and activity demands a corresponding holiness of life in us, as Lev. 19 demonstrates

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Main point: **Lev. 19:2-4:** You shall be **holy**, for I the LORD your God am **holy**.

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Seen in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment: **Lev. 19:12:** You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the **name** of your God: I am the LORD.

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Conclusion: **Lev. 19:37:** And you shall observe all my statutes and all my rules, **and do them** : I am the LORD.

Cf. Lev. 18:2-5; 20: 7-8, 26; 22:31-33

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Throughout Lev. 17-26 God declares that we should be holy, because "I am the LORD **who sanctifies you**."

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God's activity demands that we keep and actually *do* each of the commandments, because as Lev. 19 repeats for nearly every commandment, "I am the LORD your God."

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2<sup>nd</sup> C: vv. 4-8, 26-28, 31

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3<sup>rd</sup> C: vv. 12

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4<sup>th</sup> C: vv. 3, 30

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5<sup>th</sup> C: vv. 3, 32

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6<sup>th</sup> C: vv. 13-14, 17-18, 34

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7<sup>th</sup> C: vv. 19-25, 29

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8<sup>th</sup> C: vv. 9-11

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9<sup>th</sup> C: vv. 11, 15-16, 18, 35-36

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“In vain”

1.

Emptiness, nothingness, vanity

2.

To take God’s name “for nothing” is to consider Him, His activity, and His resulting reputation, to be nothing. To be empty. To be dead.

3.

### Reason

1.

“The LORD will not hold him guiltless”

1.

*Because* God is active, He *responds* to those who act as if He is not active.

2.

The *holiness* of God’s activity demands the *punishment* of man’s unholy activity.

1.

**Ezek. 7:27:** The king **mourns**, the prince is wrapped in **despair**, and the hands of the people of the land are **paralyzed by terror**

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***According to their way I will do to them  
, and  
according to their judgments I will judge them  
, and  
they shall know that I am the LORD  
."***

### The Issue of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment

1.

#### **The Two Ethical Dynamics of the Covenant: God's Sovereign Administration & Man's Responsible Reception**

1.

Because God is sovereignly active in redeeming us, we are responsible to receive & respond to His activity accordingly. "Be holy, for I am holy."

2.

Maintain the right order of priority

1.

The right order: God's sovereignty is primary; man's responsibility is secondary.

2.

We must keep God's sovereign administration of the covenant (His name--His reputation based on what He does) primary and man's responsible reception of/activity within the covenant

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("take" His reputation seriously in all of life) secondary.

3.

Just as was the case with the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment's *commitments & requirements*, and the 2<sup>nd</sup>

Commandment's

*words*

&

*deeds*

, to ever place the second thing first is to put the cart before the horse, and to pervert God's covenant with us.

1.

1<sup>st</sup> C: God's *commitments* are foundational for His *requirements*; else we fail to recognize Him as the true God, and our God, and seek to follow His law without depending first on His promise (equals antitheism, apostasy, unbelief, and legalism/works righteousness)

2.

2<sup>nd</sup> C: God's *words* interpret His *deeds*; else we imagine our own interpretation of His deeds, and fail to believe & obey His words (equals idolatry)

3.

3<sup>rd</sup> C: *God's activity* sustains, redeems, leads, and obligates *our own*; else we trust in and give honor to our own strength rather than in His alone (equals Pelagianism)

4.

### Put Simply

1.

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Krabbendam: Love God for what He **DOES**

2.

Revised: Love God *in accord with* what He does

3.

### Refinement of terms:

1.

*Our* ethical activity needs to be brought into accord with *God's*

## The Biblical Commentary on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment

1.

### In Deuteronomy 14: God redeems you to life from death

1.

In the past: Do not engage in hopeless pagan grieving rituals for the dead 1-2

2.

In the present: Do not eat animals “vitally” associated with death 3-21

1.

Parted hoof / chew cud: Clean 4-6



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2.

Four-footed & don't part hoof: killers! Part hoof & don't chew cud: eat dead & disgusting things. All unclean. 7-8

3.

Water animals with fins & scales: clean. No fins or scales: unpleasant, formless, loathsome: unclean. 9-10

4.

Birds of prey: killers! Vultures: scavengers! Unclean. 11-18

5.

Insects that eat dead or live animals: unclean! 19

6.

Clean birds: clean. 20

7.

Animals that die naturally: unclean. 21a

8.

In the future: Do not ward off death via pagan rituals

1.

Kid in its mother's milk: forcing life into death to secure life in future 21b

2.

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Offer God tithes with rejoicing trusting He will provide in the future. Brings the LORD's blessing "in all the work of your hands that you do." 22-29

3.

### In the History of Redemption

1.

The Old Covenant Problem

1.

Man's unholy life

2.

The New Covenant Promise

1.

God will bring man's activity into accord with His own by putting His Spirit in us and causing us to walk in His statutes (Ezek. 36:27)

2.

The New Covenant Fulfillment

1.

God sanctified us historically in Christ's death (Heb. 10:10, 14), definitively at our conversion (1

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Cor. 6:11), sanctifies us progressively in this life (Heb. 10:14), and will sanctify us completely in our final glorification (Zech. 14:20; 1 Thess. 3:13; Rev. 19:7-8; 21:2)

### **The Application of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment**

1.

#### **Class Member's Questions & Issues**

2.

#### **Duties Required – WLC 112**

1.

The third commandment requires,

1.

That the name of God, his titles, attributes, ordinances, the word, sacraments, prayer, oaths, vows, lots, his works, and whatsoever else there is whereby he makes himself known,

2.

be holily and reverently used in thought, meditation, word, and writing; by an holy profession, and answerable conversation,

3.

to the glory of God, and the good of ourselves, and others.

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4.

### Sins Forbidden – WLC 113

1.

The sins forbidden in the third commandment are,

1.

the not using of God's name as is required;

2.

and the abuse of it in an ignorant, vain, irreverent, profane, superstitious, or wicked mentioning or otherwise using

3.

his titles, attributes, ordinances, or works,

1.

by blasphemy, perjury;

2.

all sinful cursings, oaths, vows, and lots;

3.

violating of our oaths and vows, if lawful;

4.

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and fulfilling them, if of things unlawful;

5.

murmuring and quarreling at, curious prying into, and misapplying of God's decrees and providences;

6.

misinterpreting, misapplying, or any way perverting the word, or any part of it, to profane jests, curious or unprofitable questions, vain janglings, or the maintaining of false doctrines;

7.

abusing it, the creatures, or anything contained under the name of God, to charms, or sinful lusts and practices;

8.

the maligning, scorning, reviling, or any wise opposing of God's truth, grace, and ways;

9.

making profession of religion in hypocrisy, or for sinister ends;

10.

being ashamed of it, or a shame to it, by unconformable, unwise, unfruitful, and offensive walking, or backsliding from it.

11.

## Reasons Annexed

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1.

The reasons annexed to the third commandment...are,

1.

because he is the Lord and our God, therefore his name is not to be profaned, or any way abused by us;

2.

especially because he will be so far from acquitting and sparing the transgressors of this commandment, as that he will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment, albeit many such escape the censures and punishments of men.

3.

### Oaths

1.

Forbidden? No; only abuses forbidden. Matt. 5:33-37; James 5:12

2.

Allowed. Gen. 24:30, 26:28; 31:44-53; 50:24; Ex. 22:11; Lev. 19:12; Deut. 6:13; Josh. 9:20; 23:7; 1 Sam. 14:24, 26; 19:6; 2 Chron. 15:12-15; Neh. 5:12-13; Ps. 89:35-36; Jer. 42:5; 2 Cor. 1:23; Heb. 6:16.

3.

Minced oaths employing words which sound like God's name or sound like words which describe His activity dishonor God

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4.

### Worry

1.

**Phil. 4:4-7:** 4 **Rejoice** in the Lord always; again I will say, **Rejoice**. 5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.

**The Lord is at hand**

; 6 do not be

**anxious**

about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to

**God**

. 7 And the

**peace of God**

, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

2.

2 Cor. 3: We are living epistles of Christ by the Spirit's work in us

3.

**2 Tim. 1:6-7:** 6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, 7 for God gave us a **spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control**

4.

**Rom. 8:28:** And we know that for those who love God **all things work together for good**, for those who are called according to his purpose.

5.

**Rom. 8:38-39:** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, **nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord**

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6.

**Matt. 6:31-33:** 31 Therefore **do not be anxious**, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But **seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**